

TIA Feedback

West Coast Economic Development Action Plan 2017

Tēnā koutou

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) would like to provide the West Coast Governance Group with feedback on the West Coast Economic Development Action Plan 2017.

TIA is the peak body for the tourism industry in New Zealand. With over 1,500 members, including key tourism operators and agencies on the West Coast, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including hospitality, accommodation, adventure and activities, attractions and retail, airports and airlines, as well as related tourism services. The primary role of TIA is to be the voice of the tourism industry. This includes working for members on advocacy, policy, communication, events, membership and business capability.

Our overall view is that the West Coast Economic Development Action Plan 2017 is a valuable and ambitious economic growth strategy. TIA is pleased to see the acknowledgement of tourism as the star performing industry in the region. This includes providing jobs for West Coasters with approximately 140 tourism jobs added in the past two years. It is encouraging to see that the region intends to capture greater value from visitor growth by developing a stronger set of iconic attractions that encourage visitors to travel across the region and stay longer, and by commercialising more experiences. This is in line with our [Tourism 2025](#) areas of emphasis of improving the spread of tourism around the country.

Governance Arrangements

It was no surprise that the importance of tourism to the West Coast's future was identified by this work. What was surprising and disappointing was the lack of tourism representation on the West Coast Governance Group. We are encouraged to see in the proposed new governance/action model that a Regional Economic Strategy Group will be

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put in place, including representatives from the private sector. We strongly recommend that tourism representatives are included in the new Strategy Group. Having the voice of tourism operators at the table will be key to finding solutions to the inevitable challenges that will arise as the Plan is implemented, and also send a strong signal that the tourism voice is welcomed and sought after. We would be more than happy to recommend suitable candidates for this Group.

Partner agencies

One of our concerns with the Plan is that important national tourism agencies, such as TIA, Tourism New Zealand, and New Zealand Cycle Trails are not acknowledged as key agencies to work with as the Plan is implemented. These national tourism agencies could work in partnership with Tourism West Coast to assist on developing the region's tourism opportunities to its full potential.

For example, one of Tourism New Zealand's strategic priorities for the period 2018-2021 is to focus on regional dispersal through region-specific campaigns as well as targeting special interest visitors such as cyclists, golfers and backpackers who visit more regions. They also hold a wealth of information on what drives international visitor demand.

New Zealand Cycle Trails has the long-term aim of developing a nationwide cycle network. They would be a useful partner to assist with the West Coast's aim of developing a regional network of world-class cycle trails.

TIA, Tourism New Zealand, the New Zealand Cycle Trails, and DOC should be recognised as partner agencies when assessing the visitor-related actions that potentially will be included in future actions plans (page 39-42).

Disposal of low value conservation land

TIA has concerns with the concept of disposing of low value conservation land. Tourism is reliant on its environment as part of the suite of resources that makes up the visitor proposition, 'Destination New Zealand'. This proposition includes landscapes, mountains, beaches, fresh water, as well as social attributes such as friendly people and visitor safety. The quality of the environment and how it is managed is inherently tied to the value proposition of the tourism industry. As such, the tourism industry champions the interests of our environment through our conduct and by being a powerful voice in New Zealand's overall management of its environmental assets.

The wealth-generating capacity of the West Coast Region will be enhanced from ensuring quality environmental resources are retained. In this lies the principle that value accrues

from non-extractive use of the environment, and that the tourism industry is a primary means of monetising this value. We recognise that this is less tangible than some other direct or primary environmental uses (such as farming) but that the value ultimately achieved is just as real. Therefore, any definition of “low value” when it comes to land must consider these more intangible factors.

Wind-blown timber from West Coast Public Conservation Land

There does not appear to be agreement that the recovery of wind-blown trees from public conservation land contributes to environmental sustainability. This is a concern to us and we would advocate that this does not happen until there is consensus that recovering wind-blown trees from land is consistent with environmentally sustainable practices.

Investment in visitor routes

We are pleased to see both that the West Coast aims to invest in visitor routes, and the focus on the Visiting Driver Safer Journeys project, which TIA has been involved with from the start. We noticed that the High Commission of India and the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in New Zealand are listed under partner agencies. We would like to stress the importance of also focusing on other nationalities and of staying well across other growth visitor markets. We would like to point out that TIA led the development of the [Drive Safe website](#) and [Rental Operators Code of Practice](#) which provide international visitors with information about New Zealand road rules and etiquette. We would like to be included as a partner agency for the ‘Investment in visitor routes’ action. More information about TIA’s Visiting Driver Safety work can be found here - <https://tia.org.nz/advocacy/tia-projects/visiting-driver-safety/>

We were pleased to see that Christchurch Airport, Queenstown Airport, Wellington Airport and Air New Zealand are being seen as partner agencies when investing in visitor routes. We were surprised to see that Hokitika Airport and Greymouth Airport are not being considered as partner agencies in this Plan. They could be small but useful partners in the region’s aim of attracting more visitors, offering an alternative to road and rail access.

Local community support for tourism

Having local communities embrace the visitor population is important and not without its challenges. For example, issues with freedom camping in some communities have had a negative impact on local perceptions of the value of visitors.

The [‘Mood of the Nation’ survey](#) commissioned by TIA and Tourism New Zealand measures New Zealander’s perceptions of tourism on a six-monthly cycle (latest research is March 2017). We suggest that the West Coast Economic Development Plan 2017 recognises the importance of the management of the social license to operate and undertakes to monitor the Mood of the Nation survey results closely, applying actions as and when required to address any negative impacts of tourism growth.

The Power of Tourism graphic (refer Appendix One) shows the value that tourism has in the community. It is a useful graphic that can be used when telling the story of how the visitor dollar is spent directly in the community and how it benefits not only direct suppliers such as accommodation, transport and dining operators, but also shops, petrol stations, and farming. This Power of Tourism graphic could be very useful in telling the tourism story, encouraging greater resident support and participation in promoting the West Coast by growing the visitor population. We suggest that you consider incorporating it into the Plan.

Freedom camping

The West Coast like many parts of New Zealand lends itself to attracting the self-drive market, including campers such as the domestic ‘Grey Nomads’ and young international visitors, who may choose a mixture of free camping, holiday parks and DOC campsites. TIA was surprised to see that freedom camping is not referred to in the Plan. In our opinion, the Action Plan – particularly Action 5: *Improving connectivity and infrastructure*- should include a focus on freedom camping and the particular infrastructure needs of this sector.

Summary

Overall, TIA is of the opinion that the West Coast Economic Development Plan 2017 captures the importance of the visitor to a regional economy well. We have made a series of recommendations above, and offer our support and assistance as required.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for more information or clarification of the above.

Ngā mihi,



Steve Hanrahan

Advocacy Manager

Tourism Industry Aotearoa

Appendix One

The Power of Tourism: How Tourism Dollars Support New Zealand

THE POWER OF TOURISM



Source: TIA, *The power of tourism*, 2017 – as sourced from <https://tia.org.nz/about-the-industry>

